

Jurisprudence of the Damned

Deleuze's Masochian Humour and Anarchist Neo-Monadology

Gregory Kalyniuk

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I argue that Gilles Deleuze's presentation of the micropolitics in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novels develops themes that might inform some aspects of an anarchist philosophy, particularly Daniel Colson's anarchist neo-monadology. Rather than institutionalising anarchy as the final way of doing away with laws, as the Marquis de Sade had ironically envisioned, Masoch subverts the law through a humourous proliferation of successive contracts, aiming for a transmutation of the sense of guilt. Between Deleuze's readings of Masoch and G. W. Leibniz, a common point can be found in the replacement of the absolute Good with a relative Best as the foundation of the law, according to which the determination of its principles must be grounded in a consideration of its consequences. While Leibniz positions God as the determinant of the Best in order to ensure the moral consequence of the greatest diversity in the world, in God's absence the horizon of morality is displaced by the contingency of historical becoming, and guilt can no longer be said to have any sufficient reason within the system of pre-established harmony. What would the appeal to the Best be like in a world where impossibles co-exist, and what role might Masoch's humour play in relation to this?

KEYWORDS

bêtise, desire, thought, law, humour

What, if any, is the relation of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy to anarchism? Deleuze claimed that both he and Félix Guattari had remained Marxists, however each in their own way (Deleuze, 1995: 171). In Deleuze's work, anarchy appears under the guises

of the Marquis de Sade's institutions of perpetual motion and Antonin Artaud's crowned anarchy. Taking this darker tone, whereby the assumption of a natural goodness innate to human nature is abandoned, any possible link to anarchism as a political philosophy must be carefully negotiated. In this essay, I will argue that Deleuze's presentation of the micropolitics in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novels offers a clue as to how this negotiation might be done.

Deleuze claims that Masoch's work has great anthropological and clinical value for showing how a specific type of perverse eroticism could reflect an attempt to come to terms with the vicious excesses of human history, while also encompassing a political philosophy that parodies the law on the basis of the contract. Whereas Deleuze presents Sade's subversion of institutional power as operating according to an art of irony, Masoch's subversion of the contractual relationship is likened to an art of humour, exemplified in such dispositions as mocking by submission and working to rule.¹ A common point between Deleuze's reading of Masoch and G. W. Leibniz is the replacement of the absolute Good with a relative Best as the foundation of the law, according to which the determination of its principles must be grounded in a consideration of its consequences. The man who obeys the law then no longer becomes righteous but guilty in advance, like the debtor who inherits a debt that can never be repaid. While Leibniz positions God as the determinant of the Best to ensure the moral consequence of the greatest diversity in the world, in God's absence the horizon of morality is displaced by the contingency of historical becoming, and guilt can no longer be said to have any sufficient reason within the system of pre-established harmony. What would the appeal to the Best be like in a world where impossibles² co-exist, and what role might the subversive force of Masoch's humour play in relation to this?

¹ "Working to rule" is an action whereby workers, in lieu of a strike or a lockout, undertake to decrease the efficiency of their labour by following the rules and regulations stipulated under their contracts to the letter.

² According to Leibniz, the best possible world was chosen to pass into existence by God, because out of an infinity of possible worlds, it met the criteria of being the most diverse while retaining the maximum of continuity between its diverse elements. Compossibility is this relation of continuity, whereby the diverse elements are able to converge upon the same world. Impossibility, on the other hand, is the relation of discontinuity whereby Adam the sinner and Adam the non-sinner, for instance, cannot converge upon the same world. Adam the sinner cannot include the world in which Adam has not sinned, while Adam the non-

Inspired by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Deleuze, Daniel Colson has appropriated some elements from Leibniz's monadology in his writings on anarchism for the purpose of laying out its ontological foundation, as well as describing some of its proposed economic arrangements. But there is a way of implicating Deleuze and Masoch (as well as Artaud and Nietzsche) in this undertaking that would broaden the scope of Colson's project beyond its syndicalist orientation. The following discussion is focused on exploring what the aforementioned thinkers may have to contribute towards understanding some of the existential ambivalences surrounding anarchy and revolution, with particular regard to questions pertaining to animality, stupidity, desire, thought, law, and, of course, humour.

ANARCHIST NEO-MONADOLOGY

Colson finds the all-inclusive nature of each monad's point of view to be one of the main features that makes monadological thought agreeable for anarchists. As simple spiritual substances, monads are each defined by a unique point of view upon the world which is contained within them, and which becomes the object of their consciousness according to individual appetite or desire. "Apperception" is the name that Leibniz gives to this form of consciousness, which takes minute perceptions already contained within the monad as its object. Leibniz's strange insistence that monads are windowless and that they only apperceive perceptions from within themselves can be understood as the consequence of rejecting relations of direct causality between them. Besides this, it is also the consequence of their relative freedom in determining what is apperceived of their internal perceptions. But without the pre-established harmony overseen by a calculating God who determines the compossibility of the world, or the coherence between the multiplicity of monadic points of view that converge upon it, what is there to prevent the diversity of the world from degenerating into contradiction? Without God, the natural state of the world is not one of compossibility, but impossibility: the monads are left free to desire beyond the artificial limits of what was formerly thought to be pre-established, and

sinner cannot include the world in which Adam has sinned. See Deleuze (1993), *The Fold*, pp. 59–61. I claim that Masoch's subversion of the relative Best involves the co-existence of impossibles, insofar as the transmutation of the sense of guilt allows Adam to be both sinner and non-sinner simultaneously.

the world multiplies into as many variations of itself as there are desires willing them into existence. But the Death of God also brings with it the birth of the human sciences and the emergent techniques of biopower and subject formation, which from modernity onwards have put windows on the monad and replaced the mythical calculations of divine providence. The foldings interior to the monad, no longer the sole object of an analytic rationality that would account for their uniqueness according to the *a priori* sufficient reason of an individual concept that subsumes them, now become the object of synthetic rationalities *a posteriori*, which construct the subjectivity of the human soul at the same time that they claim to illuminate its objective being. For contemporary anarchist politics, this technocratic appropriation of desire clearly forms the more urgent object of possible subversion, as opposed to the old theological dogmas. For Colson, the impossible multiplicity of monadic points of view expresses a “strange unity” capable of driving this subversion, and of fulfilling an experiment in the creation of new arrangements and associations amongst beings.

Beyond subjective predispositions and prejudices, and beyond the social institutions that produce subjectivity through an exercise of power guided by various historically contingent forms of knowledge, what is left of our point of view over the world that could still be said to be our own, and not simply the product of these disciplinary, normalising mechanisms? When freed of the social imperatives to which it is subordinated, is the human subject left with the volition to create values independently? Or was it always nothing more than an assemblage of reactive forces which devolves into animality in the absence of discipline? Or could a volition towards higher values, such as those affirmed by the will to power for Nietzsche, or which Proudhon would have called Justice, somehow be implicit to this animality peculiar to thought? Colson traces the source of such a volition to the ancient Greek notion of *apeiron*, whose paradoxical meaning encompasses both ignorance and infinity. In *A Short Philosophical Dictionary of Anarchist Philosophy From Proudhon to Deleuze*, Colson describes it as “the indefinite and unspecified foundation from which the infinity of things is unceasingly born” (Colson, 2001: 138).³ The pure difference of *apeiron* accounts for the sufficient reason of each monad’s singularity and qualifies the pri-

³ I would like to thank Jesse Cohn for sharing his unpublished translation of Colson’s *Petit lexique philosophique de l’anarchisme de Proudhon à Deleuze*, which was an invaluable reference for this essay.

mordial fullness of desire against the oppressive mechanisms that would dictate its lack and make it into the enforcer of its own subjugation. But when Colson considers the complementarity of good sense and common sense, he says nothing about *apeiron*. Instead, he tries to save common sense from the “mixture of clichés and received ideas” (Colson, 2001: 297–98) that form good sense. It is here where he falls short of seeing his critique of representation through to its end by overlooking the insights of Artaud, arguably the most important anarchist in Deleuze’s canon.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze credits Artaud for having inaugurated a transcendental empiricism that opposes the *genitality* of a fractured thought to the assumed innateness of a common sense incapable of escaping its subjective or implicit presuppositions (Deleuze, 1994: 147).⁴ For Artaud, “innateness” does not consist of common sense and its presuppositions, but of a genitality that violently forces thought to think its own central collapse, and discover that its natural “powerlessness” is indistinguishable from its greatest power. Before it is possible to begin thinking, one must first be liberated from all that *everybody knows* and *no one can deny*, or the postulates of the system of non-philosophical knowledge that constitute what Deleuze calls the dogmatic Image of thought. In stripping the moral variant of this Image of its pre-philosophical pretensions, Nietzsche had discovered its authentic repetition in a thought without Image, which he allied with paradox in a war against representation and common sense (Deleuze, 1994: 134). Meanwhile, for Colson it is common sense itself which affirms creation in the “interstices of the authorised discourses” (Colson, 2001: 298) belonging to the dogmatic Image. But how can the “strange unity” grounding anarchist thought be accessed through these interstices without becoming perverted by the authorised discourses? For Artaud, the work of managing to think something at all is a painful and difficult process requiring a violent encounter that will force it to confront the conditions of a previously unknown problem. In *The Theatre and its Double*, for instance, he envisioned the possibility of bringing about a revelation that would finally exteriorise the “latent undercurrent of cruelty through which all the perversity of which the mind is capable, whether in a person or a nation, becomes localised” (Artaud, 1999: 19). This revelation would take place through the medium of theatre:

⁴ See Kalyniuk (2014), “Crowned Anarchies, Substantial Attributes, and the Transcendental Problem of Stupidity,” p. 196, where I discuss this theme at greater depth.

theatre ought to pursue a re-examination not only of all aspects of an objective, descriptive outside world, but also all aspects of an inner world, that is to say man viewed metaphysically, by every means at its disposal. We believe that only in this way will we be able to talk about imagination's rights in the theatre once more. Neither Humour, Poetry, or Imagination mean anything unless they re-examine man organically through anarchic destruction, his ideas on reality and his poetic position in reality. (Artaud, 1999: 70)

Artaud's decadence and self-destructive character may make him seem like the prototype of what has been derisively described as "lifestyle anarchism," or the nihilistic posturing that abandons the imperative of social transformation while retaining anarchy as a mere fashion statement. But the affective immediacy that bypasses the constraints of representational thinking in his theatre of cruelty, which had the clear aim of liberating all of social reality from spiritual degeneration, is something that common sense simply cannot duplicate.

To truly affirm the mode of speculative thinking demanded by anarchism, common sense is not enough. Common sense fails to grasp what stupidity [*bêtise*] is in relation to the individual who thinks, the ground of their thought, and the process of individuation through which the thinking individual and the ground are linked by virtue of the question of stupidity (Deleuze, 1994: 151–52).⁵ Against the notion that error, understood as the failure of good sense within the form of an intact common sense, comprises the sole "negative" of thought, Deleuze claims that stupidity, malevolence, and madness must be understood as properly transcendental problems in their own right, the distinctness of which makes them irreducible to error (Deleuze, 1994: 148–151).⁶ Colson's insistence upon the legitimacy of common sense in the absence of good sense would be akin to Deleuze's definition of error itself. For Deleuze, error is an act of misrecognition in relation to

⁵ The French term *bêtise* means both stupidity and animality. For Deleuze, transcendental stupidity or groundlessness is the animality peculiar to thought, without being animality *per se*. It is thought in its genitivity, or the natural "powerlessness" that is indistinguishable from its greatest power. See Deleuze (1994), *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 275, 150.

⁶ I discuss this further in Kalyniuk (2014), p. 197.

a positive model of recognition or common sense that assumes the honesty of the one who is mistaken, while stupidity is all the more mysterious for not presupposing any such positive model or honesty (Deleuze, 1994: 148–49). When workers spontaneously converge to take over factories and form new associations, for instance, what leads them to stop short of questioning the positive model of their form of work, or of “work” itself? Colson is fond of Peter Arshinov’s slogan, which was addressed to the Makhnovists: “Proletarians of the world, look into the depths of your own beings, seek out the truth and realise it yourselves: you will find it nowhere else” (Arshinov, 1987: 261). Would the proletarians have encountered the limits of thought in the depths of their beings, only to be forced to think new thoughts like Artaud? When stupidity and cruelty are channeled through individuation, the ground of thought is raised to the surface without being given any recognisable form (Deleuze, 1994: 152–53). Deleuze is still optimistic, however, that the constitution of the highest element of a transcendent sensibility will still be possible once the individual reaches the point of intolerance for stupidity and cruelty, a turning point at which a revolutionary consciousness of limits informs the creation of new values. The ignorance and infinity encompassed by *apeiron* must for this reason be given priority over common sense and be confronted with the force of an existential imperative, or else anarchism may be fated to repeat the very stupidity that it rightfully holds in contempt for appropriating human progress, not to mention the emancipation of life that is as irreducible to discourses of progress as stupidity is irreducible to error.

Amid the ruins of the Platonic Good and the supposed neurosis of human Reason during the Baroque crisis, Deleuze explains how Leibniz, acting as God’s attorney, had to rebuild the same world on another stage according to a universal Jurisprudence (Deleuze, 1993: 67–68). Instead of asking what object corresponded to a given luminous principle, he asked what hidden principle or concept could be invented for this or that perplexing case or singularity. Through a multiplication and proliferation of such principles, he aimed to neutralise his enemies and make them impossible with the world as he had rebuilt it. Already anticipating the Death of God, Leibniz undertook this method in an attempt to defend God’s cause and prevent the world from descending into contradiction. This involved his infamous justification for evil as the unavoidable consequence of pre-established harmony, according to which God chose the least quantity of

conceptual complexity for the set of ideas determining the greatest quantity of diversity amongst monads converging upon the best of all possible worlds. A less perfect world, according to Leibniz, would be both less diverse and more evil: more evil because the complexity of the set of ideas determining it would be greater, and therefore more arbitrary. In all possible worlds, the damned are the victims of evil. They are incapable of forming ideas any clearer than their simple hatred of God, and in this sense function like automata incapable of actual thinking (*ibid.*, 71). Like the men of resentment and slave morality whom Nietzsche would later condemn in the *Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche, 1989), Leibniz saw them as finding their only purpose in being dominated by those of a stronger will. As Deleuze mysteriously claims, they are the only souls to whose detriment happier and more capable souls are able to make any progress (Deleuze, 1993: 74). Would this be because their stupidity illuminates the ground that rises to the surface, or the natural powerlessness of thought that is indistinguishable from its greatest power? Or would it be for the more straightforward reason that they produce the inescapable condition of domination that animates the world? With a twisted sense of optimism, Leibniz positioned the infinity of the damned as the foundation of the best possible world, in that *they liberate an infinite quantity of possible progress* in the service of other monads (*ibid.*). In a world that has liberated a greater quantity of possible progress than any previous era of human civilisation, the social forms of capitalism are often touted as reproducing the laws of nature itself.

Does pre-established harmony obscure a more fundamental distinction between the social and the proprietary, or does the distinction between the social and the proprietary obscure a more fundamental pre-established harmony? According to Georges Gurvitch, Leibniz's preoccupation with the metaphysical doctrine of pre-established harmony prevented him from pursuing the antinomies he had uncovered between the juridical frameworks of society and State, and between the *jus societatis*, or right of society, and the *jus proprietatis*, or right of property, to their full conclusion (Gurvitch, 1947: 65). First opposing the identification between society and State, Leibniz claimed that because all laws (including natural laws) were essentially contingent and arose from "truths in fact," their origins had to be sought in the smallest groups making up society (*ibid.*, 65). The autonomous social laws engendered and possessed by these groups and the power derived from them presupposed both a harmony between equivalents and

integration into the whole. The common life of the group therefore enjoyed a social law of peace. But opposed to this was an inter-individual law of war, which resulted from the enslavement of the common life of the group to the law of individual property (*ibid.*, 64–65). Leibniz maintained that the subordination of social power to the right of property originated out of relations of unilateral possession between men and animals being transposed into the common life of the group, where the law of domination eventually succeeded in dominating men themselves through the intermediary of animals and things (*ibid.*, 65). This account of the origin of social domination is dramatised in what Deleuze and Guattari call the becoming-animal of masochism, according to which instinctive forces are rendered immanently thinkable by undergoing the senseless cruelty of domestication to which animals are subjected (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 155–56, 259–60). The purpose of this child-like exercise is to tame stupidity, or the animality innate to the power of thinking, by reliving the history of social domination in relation to the domination of animals that lies at its origin. But the crisis of property provoking this exercise is first and foremost reflected in Leibniz’s theory of appurtenance itself: the organic body is a self-contained world full of little animals that are inseparable from its fluid parts and which are also worthy of life, despite the body being the property of a thinking monad (Deleuze, 1993: 109). Animal monads are perpetually reshuffled between bodies, and insofar as they are damned, liberate an infinite quantity of possible progress for the world. In response to this crisis, Gabriel Tarde was led to re-conceive all social relations in terms of mutualised and universalised possession and reduce being to the terms of *having* (Tarde, 2012: 51–52), while Peter Kropotkin, in responding to the related crisis of Social Darwinism, speculated that facts of unconscious mutual aid would someday be discovered in the life of micro-organisms (Kropotkin, 2006: 8). The right of society and the right of property become virtually indistinguishable once relations between men and animals are problematised on the microcosmic scale internal to the organism, since the organism is both a society of parts as well as the property of a monad. This would mean that the food chain is a fundamentally ecological instance of pre-established harmony, and that the smallest groups making up society exist on a sub-molecular level. Echoing Proudhon’s infamous proclamation that *property is theft*, for Alfred North Whitehead this would mean that *life is robbery*, since the organism, as a living society, may or may not be a higher type of organism than the food that it

ingests, therefore requiring a moral justification for the robber as much as for life itself (Whitehead, 1978: 105).

But did Proudhon grasp the ultimate implications of the Baroque crisis? In *What is Property?*, he likened the right of property to a moral quality infused into things, laid claim to by a proprietor who exhibited the power-of-attorney over the Creator (Proudhon, 1994: 125). In more practical terms, he defined property as the right to enjoy and dispose of the fruits of another's industry and labour while lying idle and not working (*ibid.*, 129). But since production is proportional to labour and not to property, property must be impossible *quid juris*, or insofar as it is considered a question of right; since it demands something for nothing, the law of increase must be impossible in principle. As a principle, it has no reason for existing aside from legitimating the power of invasion that makes possession into a fact. For Proudhon, the extension of the natural fact of original possession into the arbitrary laws set consistently with the right of property defies jurisprudence, according to which a fact, such as the universal recognition of the right of property, cannot produce or legitimate the right of property itself (*ibid.*, 64). If it could, then the right of property would be capable of objectifying concrete relations of having according to abstract terms of being, putting the proprietor into an element of calm in relation to his property as if this relation could be established once and for all (Deleuze, 1993: 110).⁷ According to Gurvitch, Proudhon's response to Leibniz's irreducible antinomies was to emphasise the importance of the law as a principle that regulated their unstable equilibrium, and to idealise the economic law of society against the political law of the State (Gurvitch, 1947: 70–71). While opposing Leibniz's pre-established harmony for its neglectful elimination of the irreducible antinomies, Proudhon attempted to free the economic laws from their subordination to the right of property by tracing their origin to non-statist society. But despite his early claim that property is theft, in his mature phase he would admit that freedom is not possible without property, and that property is the greatest revolutionary force in existence.⁸ As we have already

⁷ For Deleuze and ostensibly Proudhon, relations of having are by their very nature impermanent.

⁸ Ironically, Proudhon's claim that property is the most revolutionary force in existence is especially true in light of Deleuze and Guattari's claim in *Anti-Oedipus* that desire is revolutionary in its own right, without "wanting" revolution *per se* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 116). While a person who wants personal freedom may take out a mortgage

seen, property, like monadic appurtenance, is immanent to the very constitution of organic bodies. Without taking property into account, economic law (as a law of peace) could only be distinguished from political law (as a law of war) by also transcending the concrete multiplicity of groupings making up social life, to which property is essential. As Proudhon became increasingly aware of the falsity of idealising the economics of society against State politics, he re-conceived the order of law engendered by the various groups making up non-statist society to be larger than the framework of economic law itself, since each of these groups would be the source of its own specific legal framework (Gurvitch, 1947: 70–71). In place of the political power of the State, the economic forces immanent to society, expressed through small-scale property ownership, would be organised into an agricultural-industrial federation based on democratic and mutualist principles. But would this new system have been able to adequately safeguard against the abuse of property to dominate and exploit the work of others, let alone the natural world itself? And despite his insistence upon immanence in his later work, did Proudhon’s analysis sufficiently address how the immanent system of capitalism was capable of constantly overcoming its limitations, only to come up against them once again in a broader form (Deleuze, 1995: 171)?⁹ The crisis of property that Deleuze sees as linking capitalism to the Baroque not only appeared with the growth of new machines in the social field, but with the discovery of new living beings in the organism as well (Deleuze, 1993: 110). The contemporary spread of genetically modified organisms in the agricultural industry and elsewhere, for instance, and the right of property established through the patenting of DNA and the human genome itself, signal the urgency of this latter appearance of the crisis now more than ever. But despite Proudhon’s acceptance that the living man was a group whose organs formed secondary groups, he was unable to see how the crisis of property could conceivably extend to the fluid parts of the organic body, instead preferring to idealise the

on a house, for instance, the desire that transcends their subjective wants and needs may not, in fact, “want” freedom at all. As we will see, Masoch’s attempt to restore property to its cruel physical immediacy in his novels entails a selective thought whose aim is to clarify the distinction between salvation and servitude, which all too often becomes obscured by virtue of the revolutionary nature of desire.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari maintain their allegiance to an ahistoricist interpretation of Marxism on the basis of this essential criterion.

transcendent existence in the sensible, intelligent and moral man (Proudhon: 2009: 23–24). Would he have then been prepared to face the full implications of the moral dilemma posed by Whitehead, that life is robbery, or did progress for him entail a foreclosure of the problem of domination outside the context of human groups, so that the proprietor of the human organism, understood in terms of the natural fact of original possession, could be put into an element of calm in relation to his property?

Voltaire and Proudhon reacted strongly against Leibniz's attempt to defend God and the existence of evil. While Voltaire made a mockery of Leibniz's optimism in his satirical novella *Candide*, Proudhon renounced all providential theism and proclaimed, "God is *the* evil" (Quoted in Löwith, 1949: 63). In an attack against the religious interpretation of history based on divine providence that Leibniz had upheld, Proudhon aimed to show how the illusion of God as its fatal determinant was the creation of man himself. Rather than associating human progress with God and the best possible world, his alternative was a Promethean, humanitarian atheism, which he identified with the figure of Satan. But while he may have fought against God and divine providence for the sake of human progress, he did not abandon the monadological thought of Leibniz altogether. In *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, Proudhon reoriented the *quid juris*, or question of right in Leibniz's monadology, as a *quid facti*, or question of fact, in order to find a proof for liberty in the reality of its function within a system of nature where the linkage of parts was only thought to be determined by God (Proudhon, 1868: 206–7).¹⁰ Would his monadology have then operated according to a universal jurisprudence, in which the rights of rational beings are assumed to be substantiated by facts while the damned are sacrificed for the greater good, or according to what we are calling a singular jurisprudence or a *jurisprudence of the damned*, which calls hegemonic rationalities into question on behalf of the automata that liberate an infinite quantity of possible progress for the world?¹¹ Instead of posing the problem in

¹⁰ Jesse Cohn's translations of passages from *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*, which are referenced in this essay, are available at collectivereason.org, 2009.

¹¹ Deleuze's understanding of universal jurisprudence seems to be quite different from the axiomatisation of "wise charity" that Leibniz had envisioned leading to the invention of a *calculus ratiocinator*, but it is debatable to what ends Deleuze may intend to appropriate universal jurisprudence as his own concept. While the reflective use of invented

these terms, Proudhon asked whether the things in which power appears are simply the vehicles of the infinite power as they were for Spinoza, or whether they possess within themselves the force with which they are endowed, as they did for Leibniz. Rejecting Spinoza's determinism, Proudhon ultimately showed a preference for Leibniz, but with considerable revision of the theocratic presuppositions of monadological thought. In place of a collective absolute that would act as a determinant rather than as a resultant, for Proudhon liberty emerges from the collective synthesis of human faculties as the power to be freed from fatality (Proudhon, 1868: 208–10). Its immanent function is constituted between the heights of a determinable ideal and the depths of a determining chaos: instead of creating ideas or things, liberty, as a power of appropriation, takes them for material and makes them different. Proudhon named the instinct for sociability preceding liberty Justice, and in opposition to its idealisation as God's immutable will, oriented Satan as the free cause animating the world. Without Satan, he claimed, Justice would have remained an instinct. But how will Satan be able to take the created ideas and things of industrial capitalism and make them different enough to render its structures of domination and exploitation impossible with the conditions of a new world? The answer, we will argue, is by means of a special kind of humour, which enacts the subversion of both stupidity and common sense alike.

DELEUZE'S MASOCHIAN HUMOUR

Humour, as Deleuze understands it, is one of two known ways, along with irony, of overturning the moral law (Deleuze, 1994: 5). However, irony and humour also share an important relation to the classical conception of the law: not in a sense that threatens to subvert morality, but in a sense that upholds it and makes political philosophy itself possible (Deleuze, 1991: 81). While irony

principles may have the conceptualisation of singularities as its object, its rationalist and anthropocentric presuppositions cast some doubts over the extent to which the universality of jurisprudence could truly be capable of repeating the event in its singularity. For this reason we have opted to distinguish a singular jurisprudence, whose object is the singularisation of the universal from the point of view of the damned according to *becomings-animal*, rather than the universalisation of the singular from the point of view of an attorney who speaks on behalf of God. If God is dead, then what sense does it make to continue speaking of universal jurisprudence outside of the specific historical context in which Leibniz was writing?

seeks to trace the laws back to an absolute Good as their necessary principle, Deleuze argues that humour attempts to reduce the laws to a relative Best in order to persuade our obedience to them (*ibid.*, 82). Whereas Leibniz had been content to believe that the relativity of the Best resulted from God's determination of a world with the greatest quantity of diversity, and that man needed to learn to see beyond its apparent injustices since they could have been all the worse if God had been less charitable, Deleuze conceives of Masoch's approach to the Best more subversively. Instead of a proliferation of principles, each of which would express the sufficient reason of this or that perplexing case in the absence of an absolute Good, Masoch dramatised the perplexity of the case through a proliferation of contracts that would parody the law for the sake of drawing out its unseen consequences. In contrast to Leibniz's defence of the Best as the ultimate and most compossible consequence of all principles, in Masoch the relativity of the Best is revealed through consequences that are profoundly impossible with one another. By descending to the consequences of following the law with too-perfect attention to detail, it is possible to dramatised the absurdity of the injustices that the morality of guilt compels the acceptance of. The law can then be derailed from the application that its legislators had intended for it, provoking the very disorder that they had sought to prevent. This method can be likened to a kind of jurisprudence, since it brings to light the perplexing case which cannot be subsumed under any existing laws. In the case of Masochian humour, the descent towards consequences takes place by means of what Deleuze describes as a "double suspension": on the one hand, the subject suspends his awareness of the world as legislated under the father's law, while on the other he clings to the feminine ideal incarnated in his fetishistic object of desire (*ibid.*, 33).¹² Suspend- ed between the external law and his own desires, the Masochian

¹² Masoch's idealisation of women provides an interesting point of contrast to Proudhon's own intolerant misogyny in his prophetically titled diatribe *On Pornocracy*. While Proudhon's position on the subject of women's emancipation could not be more antithetical to Masoch's in this infamous, posthumously published work, what they do share in common is an obsession with woman's ability to seduce: either through a desexualising of desire that moves in the direction of higher ideals, or through a desacralising of love that moves in the direction of lower animal instincts. Where they most significantly differ is over the implications of woman's seductive power for the oppressive uses of the right of property.

hero vacillates as if caught between impossible worlds.¹³

The contract is central to Deleuze's understanding of Masoch's humorous subversion of the law. Rather than institutionalising anarchy with the establishment of mechanisms of perpetual motion as the final way of doing away with laws, as Sade had ironically envisioned, Masoch's method involved a humorous proliferation of successive contracts, the terms of which would become increasingly strict in order to prepare the way for a utopian law that would eventually override them (Deleuze, 1991: 92–93). In contrast to Rousseau's social contract, according to which freedom could only be attained under the constraint of submitting oneself to the abstract principles of the general will, both Proudhon and Masoch understood the contract in more concrete terms, and preferred for there to be many different contracts tailored to the desires of particular individuals. But while Proudhon saw the contract as the only moral bond that free and equal beings could accept (Proudhon, 2003: 171), for Masoch freedom could only come after the contract ran its limited course. For instance, in Masoch's novel *Venus in Furs*, Severin draws up an elaborate contract with a cruel mistress in which he gives away all of his rights and becomes her rightful property for a limited period (Sacher-Masoch, 1991). This use of the contract parodies the law (specifically the marriage contract) by making it more arbitrary and complex, while forcing desire to confront the stupidities that the law imposes over it in the most concrete terms.¹⁴

According to Leibniz, the arbitrariness and complexity of a law proves that it is not really a law, since it cannot be broken down into self-evident axioms. This arbitrariness and complexity is echoed in the guilt that Masoch would intensify through the contract, with the paradoxical aim of dissolving it with humour. Drawn up for the sole purpose of pushing the contracted party to annul its restrictive conditions, this parodying of the contract

¹³ Jean-François Lyotard makes a similar connection between masochism and impossibility in relation to the patient about whom Freud writes in his essay "A Child is Being Beaten." The patient is not certain whether the beaten child in her masturbatory fantasy is herself or someone else. Leaping from one version to another in a single instant, the fantasy presents a simultaneous occurrence of the impossibles in the form of symptoms that ambiguously "phrase" more than one universe. See Lyotard (1988), *The Differend*, p. 83.

¹⁴ Although Masoch had likened his contract to a pact with the devil, its relation to the liberation of desire seems to be completely at odds with the relation that Proudhon would have seen between Satan and human liberty.

brings attention to the law's power to enslave when taken for granted in its abstractness and put into the hands of the juridical elite. Through a humourous proliferation of contracts that would enact the punishment before the misdeed was committed, Masoch aimed to show how the intensification of guilt could result in the transmutation of its meaning, and inspire his readers to conceive of a utopian law of self-management modelled on the peasant communes that had emerged on the fringes of the Habsburg Empire during the mid nineteenth century.

In order to end his complicity with structures of patriarchal domination and be reborn a new Man, the Masochian hero submits himself to the imaginary law of an archaic, agrarian matriarchy by means of the contract, which comes to assume a ritualistic character for idealising hunting, agriculture, regeneration and rebirth in the image of femininity. While Masoch's idealisation of a matriarchal form of agrarian communism was probably a genuine reflection of his political beliefs, he also considered even more radical positions, such as those of the mystical sect of wanderers who once roamed the steppes of Galicia. Masoch gave voice to their beliefs in his short story "The Wanderer":

"Nations and states are big people, and like the little ones, they are eager for plunder and thirsty for blood. It's true—whoever doesn't want to do harm to life—can't live. Nature has forced us all to rely on the death of others in order to live. But as soon as the right to exploit lower organisms is permitted by necessity, by the drive for self-preservation, it's not just restricted to man harnessing animals to the plough or killing them; it's the stronger exploiting the weaker, the more talented the less talented, the stronger white race the coloured races, the more capable, more educated, or, by virtue of a benevolent fate, more developed peoples the less developed" (Sacher-Masoch, 2003: 9).

If Severin's aim is to escape the father's law in order to be reborn a new Man, then the wanderer compounds this with aiming to also escape the mother's law, as embodied in Nature's cruelty. But rather than idealising an even earlier, pre-civilised or pre-agricultural form of society as an alternative, the wanderer is decidedly pessimistic about the prospects of humanity. While Proudhon exalted Satan as a Promethean figure of progress, for the wanderer it is Nature herself who is Satanic:

“I saw the truth,” the old man cried, “and saw that happiness lies only in understanding, and saw that it would be better for this race of Cain to die out. I saw that it is better for a man to go to his ruin than to work, and I said: I will no longer spill the blood of my brothers and rob them, and I abandoned my house and my wife and took up the wanderer’s staff. Satan rules the world, and so it is a sin to take part in a church or a religious service or the activities of the state. And marriage is also a mortal sin” (Sacher-Masoch, 2003: 11).

In response to the wanderer’s disavowal of Cain’s legacy, or love, property, the state, war, work, and death, Nature replies that she is beyond good and evil, and that it is childish to think that one could escape her cold and maternal severity by retreating into asceticism. Masoch’s preference for agrarian communism could in this sense be understood as a middle position between syndicalist and primitivist strains of anarchism, albeit with a touch of decadent humour that fetishises the image of a gentle female despot under the guise of a cruel mistress, an agrarian matriarch, or Nature herself. The contractual pact with the devil, however, does not lead one to liberty on the basis of honouring its terms and conditions.¹⁵

DELEUZE, MASOCH, AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

The psychoanalytical understanding of masochism presents certain challenges to Deleuze, who wishes to validate Masoch against many of Freud’s claims. According to Freud, the human organism is governed by two agencies of repetition: the life instincts and the death instincts. The normal tendency of these two agencies is to work together under the guidance of the pleasure principle, which renders the death instincts harmless to the organism by redirecting their aggressive force towards external objects, resulting in erotogenic sadism (Freud, 1984: 418). But a portion of the death instincts always escapes this outward transposition by the libido and is instead turned inward and dammed up within the organism, resulting in a primary, erotogenic maso-

¹⁵ In a certain sense, Masoch’s parodying of the law parallels some of the mechanisms that maintain the powerlessness of the chief in the Amazonian societies studied by Pierre Clastres, however in the guise of an idealised femininity rather than a pacified masculinity. See Pierre Clastres (1987), *Society Against the State*, pp. 27–47.

chism, which Freud took to be an innately human predisposition that made the unconscious sense of guilt possible (Freud, 1984: 418–21). “Defusion” was thought to occur when a flood of traumatic excitations would skewer the balance between outwardly transposed and inwardly dammed up death instincts, displacing and neutralising a quantity of cathectic energy and leading either the masochistic or the sadistic tendency to prevail. Freud called the compounding of the innate predisposition of erotogenic masochism with an introjection of erotogenic sadism “the economic problem of masochism,” because he thought that in damming the flood of traumatic excitations, the life instincts were put in the service of the death instincts, resulting in the paradoxical striving for painful experiences, regression to childish or feminine behaviour, and an intensified sense of guilt manifested by an exceedingly severe superego. However, for Deleuze, Freud’s attempt to explain secondary forms of masochism in this way presents the problem of rendering it reversible with sadism according to merely fluctuating combinations of life and death instincts, and of conflating the two perversions into a hybrid “somasochism.” To the contrary, Deleuze argues that their perceived complementarity is only analogical and denies that they could be reversible or even operate within one and the same individual, claiming that a passage from sadism to masochism would have to entail a desexualisation and resexualisation of the libido in every hypothetical instance. The question would then be whether this is an actual, ongoing process, or a structural presupposition that would sever masochism from all communication with sadism (Deleuze, 1991: 107–10).

For Deleuze, there is only a kind of sadism that is the humourous outcome of masochism, and a kind masochism that is the ironic outcome of sadism (Deleuze, 1991: 39–40). Preferring the premise that sadism and masochism each presuppose desexualisation according to their own distinctive structural criteria, he claims that in sadism, desexualisation takes the form of an Idea of pure negation that constitutes thought in the superego, whereas in masochism, it takes the form of a fetishistic disavowal that founds the imagination in the ego (Deleuze, 1991: 127–28). In sadism, the superego expels its own ego and projects it upon victims whose destruction through a cumulative series of partial processes allows for a portion of libidinal energy to be neutralised and displaced (Deleuze, 1991: 126–27). This finally determines an ego-ideal that incarnates the death instinct as an Idea of pure negation. Thought becomes resexualised when the law is transcended

in the direction of the Idea of Evil as the grounding principle for institutions of atheism, calumny, theft, prostitution, incest, sodomy, and murder. It assumes the ironic appearance of masochism in the sense that, despite all of the superego's apparent tyrannising in its ascent towards the Idea of Evil, tyranny cannot be equated with the principle itself, since it victimises all egos indiscriminately. But where sadism proceeds by way of speculative thinking and quantitative accumulation, masochism proceeds by way of mythical-dialectical thinking and qualitative suspense. In masochism, the ego disavows the paternally modelled superego and genital sexuality, allowing for the neutralisation and displacement of a portion of libidinal energy. But by entrusting the phallus to the mother-image, the threat of castration understood in the conventional psychoanalytical sense is avoided. The maternal phallus incarnates the death instinct as fetish out of the neutralised and displaced libido, and gives birth to the ideal ego of the "new Man devoid of sexual love" by suspending the passage of time in a frozen moment (Deleuze, 1991: 128). When the satisfaction (rebirth) of the punishable desire (incest) comes about as the ungrounded consequence of its very punishment (castration), however, the terms of the contract are transcended, and the imagination becomes resexualised. It assumes the humourous appearance of sadism in the sense that, despite the ego's disavowal of pleasure in its emulation of the ideal, the reborn ego assumes a narcissistic ideal of omnipotence and regains a sense of pleasure out of the superego's destruction.¹⁶ Through this displacement of unconscious cathexes, the real father is excluded and the new Man becomes father of himself. In fact, the apparent absence of sexual love seems to only be a deception, since the new Man identifies sexual activity with incest and rebirth, and castration, as the symbolic condition for the success of this identification, simply stands for female control over the male genitalia (Deleuze, 1991: 93–94). With the displaced libidinal energy reinvested in the suspended reality, pleasure does not come about as the consequence of libidinally bound death instincts and erotogenic pain, but of repetition as the unconditioned condition of the pleasure principle, or desire in its pure and unmediated form,

¹⁶ In this sense, Deleuze's understanding of humour stands in stark contrast to that of Freud, for whom the humourous attitude is brought about when cathectic energy is withdrawn from the ego and transposed on to the superego. The superego then assumes the role of consoling the ego and protecting it from the suffering that it was not able to cope with on its own. See Freud (1985), "Humour," pp. 427–433.

freed from pleasure as its determining constraint. In monadological terms, the amplitude of the animal monads would be increased through an *undamming of the damned* that, by way of a process of *vice-diction*, would decompose relations of domination and appurtenance within the organic body and suspend its relation of compossibility over an infinitesimal abyss.

To move beyond Freud's overly mechanistic conception of the life and death instincts, let us attempt to translate the economic problem of masochism into the Nietzschean language of forces. Whereas Sade derived a thought of pure negation from the perpetual movement of raging molecules using mechanically grounded quantitative techniques, Masoch's uninterrupted process of desire is rooted in a dimension of interiority that is irreducible to the vulgar materialist outlook. The qualitative relation of imagination that arises out of the dialectical interplay of disavowal and suspense in the masochistic ego is perhaps equivalent to the will to power, or the qualitative relation that corresponds to the difference in quantity between active and reactive forces (Deleuze, 1983: 37–44). While disavowal has the quality of a reactive force that separates the body from what it can do and establishes for it the consciousness of an ideal, suspense takes the quality of an active force that reaches out for power over what is reactive in the ideal (castration as the punishment for incest) and transforms it into something active (the pleasure of rebirth). The ideal ego of disavowal, like the perspectival falsification or will to truth that helps the body to preserve itself (Nietzsche, 2003: 50–51), ultimately comes to serve the will to power, or inner world of physical forces, which surfaces by way of the narcissistic reversal of the ideal in the suspended moment. By contrast, Sade's system, like some parts of Freud's speculative metapsychology, is limited to a mechanistic interpretation of forces that describes the process of desire on the basis of quantity alone. But whereas Freud designated the tendency in life to return to an earlier state of equilibrium as the morally ambiguous Nirvana principle, Sade attempted to cancel differences in quantity by reducing becoming to a terminal process that would find its *telos* in the Idea of Evil. For Sade, the qualitative interpretation of forces is limited to a thought of pure negation, which can only affirm the thought of eternal return mechanically by institutionalising a physically reversible system in which initial and final states are posited as identical (Deleuze, 1983: 46). Masoch's appropriation of the form of the contract, on the other hand, reverses slave morality by bringing about a reinterpretation of its corresponding qualities of

force in the imagination, passing from a lower, reactive nature to the sentimental and self-conscious Nature that finally reveals itself to the wanderer (Deleuze, 1991: 76). Likened to a pact with the devil or “culturism” by Deleuze, it is similar to the special form of training that Nietzsche called “Culture” in opposition to the “Method” whose fault is to always presuppose the good will of the thinker and take the recognition of common sense as a given (Deleuze, 1983: 108). Masoch’s contractual willing of the punishment before having committed the punishable misdeed affirms the eternal return as an ethical and selective thought, by way of a culturist training that aims to reinterpret the difference between salvation and servitude. The infinite debt from which the sense of guilt derives is absolved through the sacrificing of pleasure, yet pleasure returns as the consequence of the *nonsense* of guilt, once guilt has been freed from debt as its determining constraint. Guilt then becomes the humourous disguise from behind which desire, like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, is able to carry together into One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident, and recreate all *it was* into a *thus I willed it* (Nietzsche, 1954: 249–254). Unlike the moral masochism that is actually the ironic outcome of sadism and the Idea of Evil as the grounding principle of the law, Masochian humour, as will to power, paradoxically reveals Nature to be a force that acts beyond good and evil on the basis of its own perspectival falsifications and idealisations. The law of the eternal return, affirmed as the jurisprudence of the damned, suspends an infinite quantity of possible progress and brings about the universal ungrounding of the best possible world, rather than its foundation.

To the extent that there are latent political philosophies at work in the respective thinking of Sade and Masoch, how might discourses of progress and civilisation figure into them? Following Freud, Herbert Marcuse claimed that upholding sexuality as an end in itself posed the threat of allowing perversions such as sadism and masochism to reverse the process of civilisation that had turned the organism into an instrument of work (Marcuse, 1966: 50). But he left little room for the possibility that this reversal could escape reappropriation by the destructive dialectic of civilisation. Against the historically specific reality principle governing the origins and growth of civilisation by means of the repressive domination of instincts, perversions could enact a regression to the sadomasochistic phase of historical development, whose reactivation would release suppressed sexuality both within and beyond the domination of civilised institutions (Marcuse,

1966: 101, 202). But while Marcuse believed that the instinctual substance of perversions was distinct from their forms of cultural repression, he tended to see sadism and masochism as more often being complicit with war, genocide, forced labour, and more generally the reduction of thought to pre-established functions reflecting what was most common in a given historical period (Marcuse, 1966: 203; Marcuse, 1991: 177–78). Deleuze’s refusal of the sadomasochistic binary, however, offers a way of understanding how the release of suppressed sexuality beyond the dominating constraints of civilisation might still maintain a revolutionary use that eschews both repression and civilisation itself. The conflict between reason and instinct that Marcuse would deny to be the strongest argument against the idea of a free civilisation (which for him would dispense with what he calls surplus-repression but not the necessity of repression as such) (Marcuse, 1966: 225–26), is perhaps indistinguishable from the conflict which instinct creates within itself according to the partial processes of destruction that determine the ego-ideal of sadism. The regressive sadomasochism referred to by Marcuse could in this sense simply be the historical instantiation of sadism’s irony. To his credit, Sade saw anarchic institutions of perpetual motion as the final way of doing away with laws that would hypocritically valorise one type of murder while legitimating another.¹⁷ But despite his hatred of tyranny, the final irony of Sade’s vision of permanent revolution seems to have since been revealed through the historical legacies of Trotsky and Mao, who produced more tyrants and crowned anarchists in the Heliogabalic sense than crowned anarchies in the nomadic-noematic sense. It would therefore be futile to deny that instinct is beyond good and evil while still attempting to distinguish, as Marcuse had, necessary repression from surplus-repression (Marcuse, 1966: 226).

¹⁷ With the French Revolution in mind, Sade posed the following questions in *Philosophy in the Bedroom*: “What study, what science, has greater need of murder’s support than that which tends only to deceive, whose sole end is the expansion of one nation at another’s expense? Are wars, the unique fruit of this political barbarism, anything but the means whereby a nation is nourished, whereby it is strengthened, whereby it is buttressed? And what is war if not the science of destruction? A strange blindness in man, who publicly teaches the art of killing, who rewards the most accomplished killer, and who punishes him who for some particular reason does away with his enemy! Is it not high time errors so savage be repaired?” See the Marquis de Sade (1990), *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, p. 332.

Instinct can only be beyond good and evil if repression is preceded by repetition as its transcendental condition, rather than *vice versa*. In contrast to Sade, Masoch's idealisation of the mother is closer to an attempt to recuperate something akin to the superid, or the pre-genital, prehistoric, pre-oedipal "pseudo-morality" that has not yet freed itself from the pleasure principle by virtue of maternal union. Marcuse believed this sensuous rationality to condition a natural self-restraint in Eros that would limit it from seeking absolute gratification (Marcuse, 1966: 228–29).¹⁸ But whereas the superid is formed out of a secret alliance between the superego and the id against the ego and the external world, for Masoch it is the narcissistic ego that imagines the libidinal morality through a disavowal of the superego (the father's likeness) and the id (genital sexuality), and a suspension of the patriarchal reality principle. Insofar as it is understood to be the timeless ideal of pleasure, the frozen moment created by this suspension cannot be restrained by the superid, since as Nirvana it is the bond that binds Eros to the death instinct. Marcuse was led to deny the reality of a non-repressive existence on the basis of this bond, since the ego's subjection to the condition of time forced it to confront death and repress the promises of the superid (*ibid.*, 231). For Deleuze, on the other hand, the death instinct only appears with the desexualisation of Eros, and the formation of the neutral, displaceable energy whose reflux upon the ego makes it narcissistic while emptying time of its mnemonic content (Deleuze, 1994: 110–14). Before it can serve as an ideal for pleasure, empty time is first and foremost the unconditioned condition for the genesis of thought. As the monstrous force of repetition, it lies beyond the pleasure principle *a priori*, allowing the innately genital new Man to bypass the repressive mechanisms of the Oedipal triangle and become father of himself, in both an oneiric and a worldly sense. His anti-oedipal humour only fetishises the pre-oedipal superid in order to stage the historical drama of becoming-animal, and affirm the eternal return of its innately active forces. It cannot therefore be the price of progress in civilisation, or have any complicity in maintaining the surplus-repression necessitated by social domination in Marcuse's theory.

When the genality of thought is juxtaposed with anal eroticism, however, the desire to become father of oneself translates into the desire to accumulate money and have it breed with itself by accumulating interest, as Norman O. Brown had argued in *Life*

¹⁸ Marcuse borrows the concept of the superid from psychoanalyst Charles Odier.

Against Death (Brown, 1985: 234–304). Building on psychoanalytical theories of infantile narcissism and anality, Brown argued that an unconscious equivalence between excrement, money, and time lies at the heart of the neurosis of modern capitalist society, in which it is manifested as the possession complex. Civilisation is driven by a repetition compulsion to regain a narcissistic ideal of omnipotence that is indistinguishable from the tensionless state of Nirvana, which only comes to assume the character of death when libidinal aggression fails to be cathected with external objects and is instead repressed. The tension produced by this repressed energy returns in sublimated form as guilt, and becomes the motivating force of the anal character's desire to accumulate money. Paralleling the economic problem of masochism, guilt is collectively expiated through the building up of an economic surplus, whose sublimated aim of escaping death finally turns life into a paradoxical death-in-life. Unlike Marcuse, Brown implicated the ambivalent relation to the mother no less than the reaction to the threatening father in the problem of guilt (Brown, 1985: 289–290). While the Masochian hero's guilt may have nothing to do, as Deleuze claims, with feeling that he has sinned against the father, his experience of it as the father's likeness within himself (Deleuze, 1991: 101) leaves the problem of how the sin will be atoned for in the social context of civilised life.¹⁹ Despite the incorporation of guilt by the quantifying rationality of the money complex having a stronger affinity with the ironic pseudo-masochism of sadism, could the humourous pseudo-sadism of masochism, understood as the Dionysian force of affirmation that Brown believed could undo the social struc-

¹⁹ In order to avoid any confusion when extrapolating upon Masochian humour beyond its original context, guilt should be understood in a metaphysical sense, capable of manifesting itself in many different ways that may not appear to have anything to do with experiencing the father's likeness within oneself. The father's likeness could simply be treated as the structural presupposition for any case in which obedience to existing social conventions may leave one feeling complicit with some form of injustice. For instance, neither mocking by submission nor working to rule would seem to have anything to do with experiencing the father's likeness within oneself, yet both are based around exaggerated acts of obedience whose aim is the destruction of the existing social conventions to which they are related. An interesting contemporary example of this might be FEMEN, the Ukrainian radical feminist group that stages topless protests against sex tourism, religion, international marriage agencies, and various other institutions that exploit and oppress women.

ture of guilt and its consequent death-in-life, conceivably save Masoch's fetishism of femininity and animality from being subsumed under commodity fetishism? In this worst of all possible worlds, what contribution is humour capable of making to the practice of a jurisprudence aiming to rescue the animal monads from their damnable fate as living currency that breeds with itself?²⁰

MASOCHIAN FETISHISM AND COMMODITY FETISHISM

What, if any, is the relation between Masoch's fetishism and the mysterious fetishism of commodities? In *Capital*, Marx had shown how the social character of labour acquires an objective character that appropriates the social relation and makes it appear to emanate from the products of labour, rather than the act of labour itself (Marx, 1967: 76–87). When the products of labour are produced directly for exchange with other products rather than for their own utility, they cease to be valued according to the labour-time necessary for their production and acquire a uniform and apparently objective social status that is determined by their demand on the market. This mystification produces a false consciousness of the social character of labour that is akin to fetish-worship, as if the inanimate commodities and money itself could be imbued with the magical powers of the abstract, homogeneous human labour to which the products of concrete labour are reduced in their heterogeneity. The workers become alienated from the social products of their labour, while these products take on a life of their own as commodities: the object becomes more human and the human becomes more object. No longer simply

²⁰ The notion of a pestilential living currency that breeds with itself is a powerful image in the folklore of many pre-capitalist societies. In *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, Michael T. Taussig (1980) examines the folkloric beliefs of Colombian peasants regarding the expropriation of their lands by surrounding sugar plantations, arguing that the peasants' understanding of wage labour in terms of devil contracts expresses a critical recognition of the dehumanising effects of capitalist production. For instance, the money earned through wage labour can only be spent on luxury commodities, and the wage labourer is destined to die an early and miserable death. Another belief involves the substitution of a hidden peso bill for a child at its baptism, after which the bill is imbued with the child's soul and becomes capable of robbing any cash register that it happens to end up in after its godparent has put it back into circulation, subsequently returning to its godparent with its spoils.

dominating things to produce products with a view to their use-value, the worker comes to be dominated by commodities whose exchange-value equalises the different kinds of labour that were necessary for their production. As a fetish, the commodity consummates the social relations that led to its production in its relationship to itself as an autonomous, monadic entity that internalises and objectifies these relations in an unrecognisable, thing-like form (Taussig, 1980: 35).²¹ It reverses the relation of domination between worker and product by alienating the worker from his living labour and appropriating it as its own dehumanised, damnable appurtenance, as if the animal monads belonging to the body of the worker could be subsumed by the commodity as it exerts its mystical, fetishistic power over the thinking monad of the worker. In light of how it conceals the relations of domination and servitude that make capitalism possible, it is not difficult to see how commodity fetishism could be understood to relate to masochism in the conventional psychoanalytical sense. For instance, Marcuse or Brown might have understood the fetish to be an agent for the reappropriation of sadomasochistic impulses by the dialectic of civilisation. But Masoch is quite different from the psychoanalytical understanding of masochism. Rather than serving to disguise the oppressive abstractions of the law or capital, his uses of the contract and the fetish enact a micropolitics of concrete experience. Just as Rousseau's social contract constrains one to submit to the abstract principles of the general will in order to attain freedom, so Marx's commodity fetishism deceives the worker into falsifying his consciousness on behalf of an abstract humanity embodied in the exchange of goods. Masoch's contract, on the contrary, parodies the act of submission in the

²¹ The Colombian peasants studied by Taussig (1980) seem to understand the commodity as a monadic entity. Rather than conceiving of the various individual terms involved in the capitalist market as atomistic corpuscles bound together by external relations, and thus conforming to the Newtonian paradigm of a self-regulating system, the peasants understand each term to embody the total set of relations in which it is bound up internally, as is apparent in the case of their magical beliefs regarding money. For Taussig, a critical understanding of commodity fetishism is only possible according to a philosophy of internal, as opposed to external relations, however he does not problematise this in terms of monadology. The significance of devil contracts to the problem of commodity fetishism strongly resonates with the connection that we are attempting to develop with the damned monads and Masoch's own contractual pact with the devil, however further elaboration upon this is beyond the scope of the present discussion.

most concrete terms in order to force new ways of thinking and desiring into existence. The suffering that the Masochian hero inflicts upon himself according to the terms of the contract have the aim of breaking the link between desire and pleasure (Deleuze, 1997: 53) and by extension the link between desire and need, in order to affirm desire as creation. Undergoing an infinite suspense that substitutes initiation rituals and becomings-animal for satisfaction, desire deliriously reinvests itself in different world-historical situations in order to relive the forgotten sacrifices that drove the progress of civilisation (Deleuze, 1997: 54). In doing so, it transcends the objectification of human labour that Marx saw as finding its sensuous expression in private property and the reduction of all physical and mental senses to the sense of *having* (Marx, 2007: 105–6), and paradoxically, it does this on the basis of the fetish.

According to Deleuze's understanding of Marx, fetishism is a transcendental illusion borne out of the conditions of common sense, for which it forms the natural object with regard to the recognition of value (Deleuze, 1994: 207–8). So long as the true problem of abstract labour casts its shadow over the cases of the concrete division of labour through which it is actualised, these cases will present a false consciousness of the problem in the guise of a fetishistic common sense. The true problem can only be grasped once it has been separated from the false problem lying in its shadow, along with the determination of the negative as the objective field of the false problem, and this is only possible if the transcendent exercise of the faculty of sociability can uncover its transcendent object in revolution (Deleuze, 1994: 208).²² For Marx, the senses can only be emancipated from private property and the stupidity that it institutionalises by becoming rehumanised as theoreticians that reconceive of objects and utility in human terms (Marx, 2007: 106–107). However, by formulating the problem of private property in terms of the reduction of all physical and mental senses to the sense of having, Marx perhaps did not anticipate Tarde's Leibnizian insight that relations of having condition the senses from the very beginning, and are by their very nature impermanent. The illusion of private property instead

²² Deleuze's transcendental empiricism is based on Kant's notion of the transcendent exercise of the faculties, according to which the experience of the sublime results from reason forcing the imagination beyond the limits of the sensible by denying it access to the rational Idea. Artaud is credited for duplicating this procedure when he opposes the genitility of thought to common sense. See Kalyniuk (2014), pp. 197–198.

arises from an objectification of concrete relations of having according to legally sanctioned terms of being. Masoch's subversion of the law takes this objectification as its point of departure, enacting its reversal by virtue of the temporary nature of the contract. Borrowing Marx's formulation of how the senses become theoreticians, Deleuze claims that Masoch aimed to represent the painful transmutation from animal to human through initiation rituals premised on the idealisation and objectification of women as works of art (Deleuze, 1991: 69).²³ For Masoch, the theoretical practice of the senses reveals the impossibility of property according to a doctrine of "supersensualism" that enacts the transcendent exercise of sociability by way of the fetish, however without recourse to the negative as its objective field, and in less exclusively human terms than it would for Marx. The role of desire as a creator of values is restored through a suspension of its sensuous object, which is then incarnated in fetishistic guise. But what could animal nature have to do with the objectification of social relations that results in commodity fetishism, and how could Masoch's fetishism of transmuted sensuality relate to the socialisation of the object that forms the theoretical undertaking of the senses for Marx? To the extent that the collective expiation of guilt through the building up of an economic surplus mirrors the economic problem of masochism, the social relation of guilt is objectified by the commodity as fetish, the consumption of which satisfies desire on the basis of its own punishment through the alienating conditions of labour, which are needed to reproduce the economic surplus of guilt. But whereas the fetishism of the commodity allows it to transcend the sensuous conditions of its manufacture, Masoch's supersensual fetishism allows desire to transcend its sensuous end in pleasure, while taking animality and femininity as its dual object. Closer to what Pierre Klossowski calls the economy of the eternal return than to the libidinal economy of masochism understood in the psychoanalytical sense, the becoming-animal of supersensualism enacts a re-willing of all one's experiences and acts, but not as *mine*; the meaning and goal of having and possession are liquidated by the pure intensity *without intention* of the eternal return (Klossowski, 1997: 68–70). Insofar as becoming-animal may lead one to relive the transcendental illusion that objectifies the social and lends an appearance of permanence to relations of having, it does this in

²³ This reference is discussed by Kazarian (2010) in "The Revolutionary Unconscious: Deleuze and Masoch," pp. 94–96.

order to force thought to grasp the true problem, rather than remain mystified by the false problem.

What ultimately distinguishes humanity from animality, and of what use is becoming-animal for overcoming the illusions of false consciousness and liberating the damned from their mystification? Colson claims that Marx's concept of species-being, which distinguishes humanity on the basis of its opposition to nature through labour, does not constitute any specifically human dimension according to libertarian thought, since it is a characteristic that is shared by all animal species (Colson, 2001: 338).²⁴ The objectification of social relations would therefore characterise the anthill or the beehive as much as it would the industrial factory, however through the medium of instinct rather than consciousness. But rather than finding its grounding in the capacity to open itself up to nature and affirm labour as a part of creation as it would on Colson's libertarian account (Colson, 2001: 338), human subjectivity for Masoch is distinguished from animal nature on the basis of the culturism of its transmuted sensuality. This transmuted sensuality tames the stupidity that for Deleuze would be the true species-being of humanity, by means of becomings-animal that dramatise the history of social domination and the complementary reduction of having to the terms of being. In contrast to the false consciousness of commodity fetishism that makes the worker into an appurtenance of the object, the delirious consciousness of the Masochian hero is content to disavow its sensual appurtenances in material reality and wait in suspense for the moment of rebirth. In place of the commodity as

²⁴ While Colson may extend Marx's definition of species-being to all animals, he rejects what he calls the "anti-speciesism" of animal liberation movements, claiming that they unavoidably situate themselves as representatives of the animal cause and should focus on unfolding their own becomings-animal, instead of campaigning for rights on behalf of animals. But this would be to overlook the extent to which becoming-animal implies a kind of representation that transmits it through the medium of culture, along with the variety of tactics utilised by animal liberation activists to inspire becomings-animal in the general public. Masoch's supersensualism could be understood in these terms as much as the clandestine publication of video footage from slaughterhouses or laboratories. Colson's account of anti-speciesism is ultimately disappointing, not only for its oversimplification of animal liberation movements and the challenges that they pose to the law, but also for overlooking how becoming-animal reveals the secondary place taken by the determination of species in relation to individuation (Colson, 2001: 33–38).

fetish, the marble statue becomes exchangeable with the mistress, the mistress becomes exchangeable with the furs, and the furs become exchangeable with the mythical matriarchs of ancient history in an entirely imaginary and supersensual process of libidinal investment that renders desire impossible with the structures of domination that it appropriates. Effectively, the power of thinking is reawakened by way of the concrete experience of the animal monads, or the stupidity that Deleuze calls the animality peculiar to thought, before any thinking monad can reclaim these animal monads as its own. But it is above all the type of humour that Deleuze finds in Masoch's novels and the way in which it is used to subvert the law that should be of interest to anarchists, rather than the particular objects of Masoch's fetishism. Unlike the black humour²⁵ that Deleuze and Guattari see as mystifying the contradictions of coexistence between paranoiac and miraculating machines in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 11), or, to return to Marx's conception of commodity fetishism, between the social character of labour and the objective character stamped upon it, Masochian humour has the aim of demystifying such contradictions by intensifying their experience to the breaking point.²⁶ As Severin proclaims at the end of *Venus in Furs*: "The treatment was cruel but radical, but the main thing is that I am cured" (Sacher-Masoch, 1991: 271).

CONCLUSION: JURISPRUDENCE OF THE DAMNED

Despite that neither of them were anarchists, both Leibniz and

²⁵ Brown would have perhaps conceived of this black humour in terms of the unconscious equivalence between excrement, money, and time.

²⁶ John Zerzan sees the schizo-politics of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* as coming close to the conviction that consumption constitutes a new form of resistance (Zerzan, 2012: 85). However, this would be to only consider one half of what is implied by the French term *consommation*, which means both consumption and consummation. Masoch can be implicated in both of these meanings, rightly and wrongly: wrongly in the mystified consumption of commodities that might parallel Marcuse's or Brown's understanding of the reappropriation of sadomasochistic impulses by the dialectic of civilisation, and rightly in the consummation of a new humanity that parallels Masochian rebirth. While Masoch may have idealised agrarian communism after having called the validity of existing reality into question, his humorous gesture of turning existing forms of domination against themselves, whether in the outside world or within the psyche, could just as easily describe the existential ambivalences that may lead others towards anarcho-primitivism.

Masoch²⁷ each have their own distinctive contributions to make towards an anarchist philosophy. While Colson finds Leibniz's notion of the world being composed out of self-contained points of view that are free to recompose it at will appealing in this regard, the monadological problem of domination remains unresolved so long as common sense is taken for granted. In our discussion, we have attempted to show how the humour that Deleuze finds in Masoch could take us some steps towards addressing this problem. In the absence of a positive model of common sense or recognition, Masoch, like Artaud and Nietzsche, seeks out the violent encounter that will force him to think and create new values. He turns his overbearing sense of guilt into a means by which to push desire to the point of delirium, and appropriates various world-historical situations in order to expose and transmute some of the relations underlying the psychology of domination and submission. Rather than resolving the perplexing cases of evil by prolonging their singularities over ordinary cases that are then taken to be their sufficient reason, as Leibniz had done in defence of God's calculation of compossibility for the relative Best, Masoch's humour reunites the singular with the universal on the basis of the contract, and by intensifying guilt to the point of parody, paradoxically succeeds in transmuting it. When guilt loses its meaning, the damned come a step closer to ending the fight for servitude that they are unwittingly implicated in. And if jurisprudence is to have any positive meaning for anarchism, it is perhaps in illuminating the ways in which desire can become complicit in its subjugation to interests that are not truly its own, and the extent to which those who are damned to this complicity, rather than being powerless before the abstract machinations of the law, have it within their power to recreate the law through their own concrete actions.

Gregory Kalyniuk is completing his Ph.D. in Cultural Studies at Trent University in Peterborough, Canada. He has a background in Continental Philosophy and Social and Cultural Anthropology, and a longstanding interest in anarchy and anarchism.

²⁷ While Masoch had apparently been influenced by Mikhail Bakunin and Panslavic libertarianism, his sarcastic ambivalence is apparent when he asks: "Will the Slavs achieve unity for Russia by getting rid of the Tsarist regime or should they aim for a strong State under the rule of a Tsarina of genius?" Quoted by Deleuze (1991) in *Coldness and Cruelty*, p. 93.

REFERENCES

- Arshinov, Peter (1987). *History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918–1921)* (Lorraine and Fredy Perlman, Trans.). London: Freedom Press.
- Artaud, Antonin (1999). *The Theatre and Its Double*. In *Collected Works, Vol. 4* (Victor Corti, Trans.). London: John Calder. 1–110.
- Brown, Norman O. (1985). *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Clastres, Pierre (1987). *Society Against the State*. (Robert Hurley in collaboration with Abe Stein, Trans.). New York: Zone Books.
- Collectivereason.org (2009). “English translation of *De la justice dans la Révolution et dans l’Église, Nouvelle édition, Tome troisième*”: <http://goo.gl/k4vzjR>.
- Colson, Daniel (2001). *Petit lexique philosophique de l’anarchisme de Proudhon à Deleuze*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1983). *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Hugh Tomlinson, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1991). *Coldness and Cruelty*. In Deleuze and Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism* (Jean McNeil, Trans.). New York: Zone Books. 7–138.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1994). *Difference and Repetition* (Paul Patton, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1993). *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Tom Conley, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1995). “Control and Becoming.” [Conversation with Toni Negri, 1990]. In Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990* (Martin Joughin, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. 169–76.
- Deleuze, Gilles (1997). “Re-presentation of Sacher-Masoch.” In *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 53–55.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Brian Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Freud, Sigmund (1984). “The Economic Problem of Masochism.” In *The Pelican Freud Library Volume 11: On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (James Strachey, Trans., James Strachey and Angela Richards, Eds.). London: Penguin Books. 411–26.
- Freud, Sigmund (1985). “Humour.” In *The Pelican Freud Library Volume 14: Art and Literature* (James Strachey, Trans., James Strachey and Albert Dickson, Eds.). London: Penguin Books. 426–33.
- Gurvitch, Georges (1947). *Sociology of Law*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Kalyniuk, Gregory (2014). "Crowned Anarchies, Substantial Attributes, and the Transcendental Problem of Stupidity." In *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics* (Edward Kazarian, Alain Beaulieu, and Julia Sushytska, Eds.). Lanham: Lexington Books. 195–222.
- Kazarian, Edward P. (2010). "The Revolutionary Unconscious: Deleuze and Masoch." *SubStance* 39.2: 91–106.
- Klossowski, Pierre (1997). *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (Daniel W. Smith, Trans.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kropotkin, Peter (2006). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. Mineola: Dover Publications.
- Löwith, Karl (1949). *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Liotard, Jean-François (1988). *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Georges Van Den Abbeele, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marcuse, Herbert (1966). *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marcuse, Herbert (1991). *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marx, Karl (2007). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Martin Milligan, Trans. and Ed.). Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Marx, Karl (1967). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I: The Process of Capitalist Production* (Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, Trans. Frederick Engels, Ed.). New York: International Publishers.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich (2003). *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (Rüdiger Bittner, Ed. Kate Sturge, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich (1954). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In *The Portable Nietzsche* (Walter Kaufmann, Trans. and Ed.). New York: Viking Press. 103–439.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich (1989). *On The Genealogy of Morals*. In *On The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (Walter Kaufmann, Trans. Ed.). New York: Vintage Books. 13–163.
- Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (1994). *What is Property?* (Donald R. Kelley and Bonnie G. Smith, Ed. and Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (2003). *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (John Beverley Robinson, Trans.). Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (2009). *The Philosophy of Progress* (Shawn Wilbur and Jesse Cohn, Trans.). LeftLiberty [pamphlet].
- Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (1868). *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église, Nouvelle édition, Tome troisième*. Bruxelles: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie, Éditeurs.

- Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von (2003). "The Wanderer." In *Love: The Legacy of Cain* (Michael O'Pecko, Trans.). Riverside: Ariadne Press. 1–15.
- Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von (1991). *Venus in Furs*. In Deleuze and Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism* (Jean McNeil, Trans.). New York: Zone Books. 141–293.
- Sade, Marquis de (1990). *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. In *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings* (Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse, Trans.). New York: Grove Press. 177–367.
- Tarde, Gabriel (2012). *Monadology and Sociology* (Theo Lorenc, Ed. Trans.). Melbourne: re.press.
- Taussig, Michael T. (1980). *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Whitehead, Alfred North (1978). *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Shelburne, Eds.). New York: The Free Press.
- Zerzan, John (2012). *Future Primitive Revisited*. Port Townsend: Feral House.